RAMANA-ARUNACHALA

by

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RAMANA ARUNACHALA

SEVEN ESSAYS

ON

BHAGAVAN SRI RAMANA MAHARSHI

BY
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AT THE FEET OF SRI BHAGAVAN

FOREWORD

IT was shortly before the beginning of World war II that some friends sent me copies of 'Who Am I?' and 'Maharshi's Gospel' and some pictures of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi. I felt that they expressed the supreme essence of spirituality, but all the same they had no dynamic effect on me and there was no urge to go to Tiruvannamalai. I had already understood that all being manifests the One Self and that the purpose of life is to realize identity with the Self, and I knew that this supreme task demands constant effort on a spiritual path under the guidance of a Master. I was making efforts to follow such a path, and people for whom I had the utmost respect had assured me that Bhagavan was not a Guru and that his teaching, however sublime, did not constitute an actual path that men could follow.

In any case, I could not have gone to Tiruvannamalai, because I was at the time a lecturer at the university in Siam. Soon, however, it became possible. In 1941 I had six months leave which I spent in India. And yet I did not go, I still believed that less aspiring effort was more practicable.

In September, when my leave ended, the war was already drawing near to Siam, so I left my wife and three children in India and went back alone. A friend had kindly opened to them his house at Tiruvannamalai, the only place where my wife wished to be. I went back without seeing Bhagavan.

In December the Japanese invaded Siam and I was arrested and interned. Just before that I had received a letter saying that my eldest daughter, then aged five, had asked Bhagavan to keep me safe through the war and he had smiled and assented. There followed four and a half long years of internment until the Japanese surrender in 1945. There was ample time for *sadhana.* More and more, Bhagavan became the support in my hatdships, and yet, somehow, distant and inaccessible.

As soon as the evacuation could be arranged I went to Tiruvannamalai, arriving there at the beginning of October; and yet it was as much to rejoin my family as to see Bhagavan that I went. Perhaps it would be more true to say that I simply felt I had to go there.

I entered the ashram hall on the morning of my arrival, before Bhagavan had returned from his walk on the hill. I was a little awed to find how small it was and how close to him I should be sitting; I had expected something grander and less intimate. And then he entered and, to my surprise, there was no great impression. Certainly far less than his photographs had made. Just a white-haired, very gracious man, walking a little stiffly from rheumatism and with a slight stoop. As soon as he had eased himself on to the couch he smiled to me and then turned to those around and to my young son and said: "So Adam's prayer has been answered; his Daddy has come back safely." I felt his kindliness, but no more.

During the weeks that followed he was constantly gracious to me and the strain of nerves and mind gradually relaxed, but there was still no dynamic contact. I was disappointed, as it seemed to show a lack of receptivity in me. and yet, at the same time, it confirmed my belief that he was not a Guru and did not give guidance on any path. And Bhagavan said nothing to change my view.

Until the evening of Kartikai when, each year, a beacon is lit on the summit of Arunachala. Or it may have been Deepavali, I am not quite sure. There were huge crowds for the festival and we were sitting in the courtyard outside the hall. Bhagavan was reclining on his couch and I was sitting in the front row before it. He sat up, facing me, and his narrowed eyes pierced

into me—long, long. It was as though they said: "You have been told; why have you not realized?" And then quietness, a depth of peace, an indescribable lightness and happiness.

Thereafter, love for Bhagavan began to grow in my heart and I felt his power and beauty. Next morning, for the first time, sitting before him in the hall, I tried to follow his teaching by using the *vichara*, 'Who am I?.' I thought it was I who had decided. I did not at first realize that it was the initiation by look that had vitalised me and changed my attitude of mind.

Gradually love and devotion deepened. I saw in Bhagavan my Guru. I became aware of the enormous grace of his Presence. And even while love for the Bhagavan who was Sri Ramana grew greater, he began to prove in me what he declared in his teaching; that the outer Guru serves to awaken the Guru in the heart. Ever more vivid and constant became the awareness of the Bhagavan within.

Daily I sat in the hall before him. I asked no questions, for the theory had long been understood. I spoke to him only very occasionally, about some personal matter. But the silent guidance was continuous strong and subtle.

I strove constantly by way of the *vichara*, according to his instructions. Other forms of *sadhana* that I still

practised began to be burdensome and unhelpful. For months I clung to them out of a sense of duty, until finally I told Bhagavan of my predicament and he smiled and assented: "Yes, all other methods only lead up to the *vichara*."

This period of constant physical proximity lasted up to the beginning of 1948. I had never been in a financial position to make me suppose I should be able to spend nearly three years at an ashram, but circumstances adapt themselves to the will of Bhagavan. Not only did his Grace keep me there, but it enabled me to go through the long period of unemployment and other trials and bereavement without anxiety or grieving. Although he never spoke of my difficulties or misfortunes he flooded my heart with peace.

Early in 1948 constant physical proximity had ceased to be necessary and professional work had become urgently necessary, and a job was found in Madras.

I took with me an almost life-size photograph of Bhagavan painted over in oils—a gift from a devotee and the most precious gift I have ever received. I showed it to Bhagavan before leaving, and he said: "He is taking Swami with him." Since then it has looked at me with the love and compulsion of a Guru and spoken more profoundly than all the other portraits.

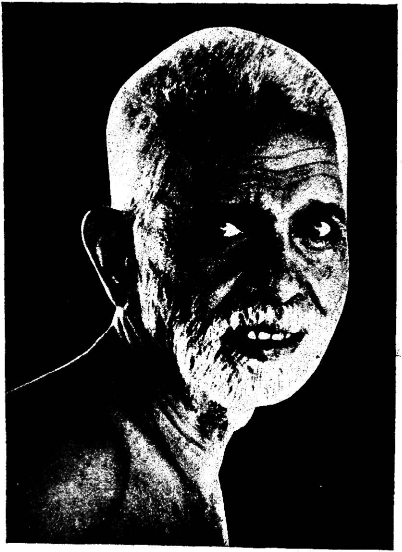
Thereafter I went to Tiruvannamalai only for weekends and holidays, and each visit was revitalising. I was there at the time of one of the operations that Bhagavan suffered and had *darshan* immediately after it, and the graciousness of his reception melted the heart and awoke remorse to think how great was the reward for so little effort made. I was there that fateful April night of the body's death and felt a calm beneath the grief and a wonder at the fortitude Bhagavan had implanted in his devotees to bear their grief. It soon became apparent that each one had discovered in his heart the truth that Bhagavan had not gone away but, as he promised, is still here. The learned may theorise about it, but all who are truly devoted have felt it.

Since that day his presence in the heart has been more vital, the outpouring of his Grace more abundant, his support more powerful. I have been to Tiruvannamalai since then also, and the Grace that emanates from the tomb is the Grace of the living Ramana.

I have written these essays mainly to show the accessibility of the path of Self-enquiry that Bhagavan has opened to us, and to help such as may be in the position in which I was for so long, of doubting the guidance even while recognizing the Divinity of Bhagavan. There is a certain amount of repetition in them, because they deal not with different subjects but with different aspects of the same subject.

There are many among the devotees, and many thousands who have not yet become devotees but crave a pathway to the Light, who have not perceived that Self-enquiry is a path made accessible to men and women in all conditions of life and made easy by the potent and subtle guidance of the Ever-Living Bhagavan. Some have thought, because it is traditionally called the 'Path of Knowledge' it is a cold path, but to know is to love, and to approach the Self is to approach perfect Love which is perfect Knowledge. Some also have thought, for the same reason, that it requires learning and an intellectual approach, but it is not so; it requires only sincerity and perseverance and love and submission to Bhagavan. Many scholars have heard and failed to understand and one whom we know to have reached the Supreme Goal was a very simple person—the Mother of Bhagavan. True, he sat beside her the whole last day, when life was ebbing from her body, with his hands on her head and heart, but if she had not been prepared for the final utter submission the ego would still have risen up at the end, as it did in another case when Bhagavan unsuccessfully tried the same thing. And now the hands of Bhagavan are on the head and the heart of every one who turns to him.

A. O.



RAMANA—ARUNACHALA

ONE of the great epics is finished, one of the supreme manifestations of Divine Grace, when God wore a human body and moved and talked with men as Bhagavan Sri Ramana, called Maharishi the Great Rishi. This was no case of an ordinary Guru, even though to call any Guru 'ordinary' may sound absurd. The Guru is on a higher plane than ordinary mortals, but Bhagavan was not on any plane: he was a man abiding in constant, unwavering consciousness of identity with the Self which is God, or, to express the same from the other side, he was God wearing a human body and submitting deliberately to human limitations. For fifty-four years his wearing the body was one long sacrifice for our redemption, and at the end the sacrifice became a martyrdom.

This acceptance of the body with its limitations gave rise to a combination of knowledge with limitations to knowledge which puzzled many visitors to Bhagavan. His spiritual knowledge was complete and constant. He spoke always with authority. There was no question of *samadhi* because he was always in *samadhi;* he was always consciously *Atma*, the Supreme Divine, Undivided, Imperishable Self. Therefore every utterance of his was a divine statement, every explanation a scripture.

And yet he showed the same human ignorance as ordinary mortals. He would ask whether so and so had arrived, how such and such a sick person was faring, and so forth. Many visitors and some devotees found this incongruous and asked how it was that one who had Divine Knowledge should not know whether a ship had arrived or a medicine worked. This was because they did not envisage the magnitude of his sacrifice and the immensity of his compassion. When he consented to wear the human form after transcending the human and all other states, he accepted all its limitations—to feel heat and cold, to suffer pain and sickness, to be bound by ignorance of events. Had he worn a human body but set himself free from its conditions of pain and sickness and ignorance of events, people would have said: "It is easy for him to tell us to abide in the heart, unperturbed by events, because he has no pain or uncertainty and we have." So he accepted pain and

uncertainty as features of the human form and showed that they cannot touch the equanimity of the *jnani*, who remains fixed immovably in the Real. This gave force to his teaching, since he was but exhorting his devotees to do as he did.

Normally one who acquires great knowledge acquires lesser knowledge by the way, as Christ said that to him who attains the Kingdom of Heaven all else is added: but this was neither a case of a Yogi struggling up from one state of knowledge to another nor of one attaining a high state and being, rewarded, as it were, with all the lower states: it was something simpler and immeasurably vaster: it was a man dying to the body and living in absolute identity with the Divine Self and then deliberately accepting all the body's limitations out of compassion for suffering mankind.

Just as Bhagavan accepted the limitations of human knowledge, so did he accept the limitations of human powers. There have been Spiritual Masters who have worked miracles to exhibit the supremacy of spiritual laws over physical, and to show men what a resplendent birthright was theirs for the taking, but the purpose of Bhagavan was different: it was to show that it is possible to remain fixed in the Self amid all the limitations of human life. Therefore he used no powers that others do not use. Therefore he set on example of submission not only to human suffering and ignorance of events but even

to the laws and conditions of the world in this Dark Age, laws and conditions which, for him, were reflected in the rules of the ashram authorities. And thus those who found the laws irksome had before them the example of Bhagavan's own submission.

It is true that sickness and misfortunes often disappeared when Bhagavan was told of them, but this was like the involuntary miracle of Christ when a sick woman touched the hem of his garment and was cured. It was the spontaneous outflow of his infinite compassion. A child was in high fever and said to his mother: "Don't call a doctor, just tell Bhagavan." She told Bhagavan and next morning the child was well; but there was no deliberate miracle, simply the child's faith and Bhagavan's spontaneous compassion.

And yet, more often, his compassion worked not in removing misfortunes but in giving peace in spite of them. A woman bereaved of her husband, a father whose only son had died, came and poured out their tale of anguish to him and he said nothing but simply turned on them his luminous eyes, shining with love and understanding, and peace filled their heart.

We, in our materialist age, have been blessed with a ministration comparable only to that of a Buddha, a Christ, a Shankara; and the measure of our materialism is the indifference that our world as a whole has shown.

With all its talk of ideals and causes, it has ignored the real blessedness of the age as blindly as the Romans ignored Christ.

However, the teaching of Sri Ramana is, by its nature, not intended to cause such an upheaval as that of Buddha or Christ, for he did not come, as they did, to enunciate a new doctrinal form. His purpose was to open up a new spiritual path for men. Apart from his outpouring of Grace upon all who turned to him, Bhagavan Sri Ramana had a definite spiritual message for mankind. That message still continues and is the reason why this essay is necessary. It is more than a message, it is a pathway to Beatitude.

The Sages have always agreed that the type of *sadhana* suited to the *Kali-Yuga* is pre-eminently *Nama-Japa*, the invocation of the Divine Name. They have agreed also that the *Jnana-Marga*, the 'direct path,' is not suited to the *Kali-Yuga*. The task undertaken by Bhagavan Sri Ramana was to re-open the *Jnana-Marga* to menkind. Throughout half a century of teaching he constantly reiterated that this is the best, the most direct and the surest path. "Self enquiry is the one infallible means, the only direct one, to realise the unconditioned, absolute Being that you really are." As I shall show later, his leaving the body has not abrogated this boon to mankind: and therefore a brief description of the *Jnana-Marga* as taught by him is here necssary.

He called it the path of *vichara* or self-enquiry. His instructions were to sit in meditation, concentrating the consciousness on the heart—not the physical heart on the left, but the spiritual heart on the right side of the chest, and at the same time to concentrate on the question: "Who am I?" He was especially insistent on this supreme centre of consciousness. The following is one of the more simple illustrations that he gave of it. When a schoolboy says 'It is I that did the sum' or when he asks you 'Shall I run and get the book for you?' does he point to the head that did the sum or to the legs that will carry him to get you the book? No, in both cases his finger is pointed quite naturally to the right side of the chest, thus giving innocent expression to the profound truth that the source of I-ness in him is there. It is an unerring intuition that makes him refer to himself, to the Heart which is the Self, in that way. The act is quite involuntary and universal, that is to say it is the same in the case of every individual."

He insisted it is necessary to try, not to argue. 'You should try to have rather than to locate the experience. A man need not find out where his eyes are situated when he wants to see. The heart is there, ever open to you, if you care to enter it, ever supporting all your movements even when you are unaware." After some practice, this meditation awakens a current of awareness, a consciousness of 'I' in the heart—not the

ego-sense but a feeling of the essential 'I' who is the universal Self—unaffected by good or ill fortune or by sickness or health. This consciousness should be developed by constant effort until it becomes more and more frequent and finally a constant undertone to all the actions of life. Then all that is needed is to refrain from interference by egoism so that it may deepen into an ever vaster peace beyond all understanding until the moment when it will consume the ego and remain as the abiding realisation of Self.

For a long time this process requires stimulation by the constant query "Who am I?". I am not this body which changes but leaves me the same. Nor am I these thoughts which pass through the mind and go out again, leaving me the same. What then am I? If various thoughts come up during meditation, do not get caught up by them and follow them out, but look at them and ask: "Where did this thought come from, and why and to whom?" And so they pass away and each thought leads back to the basic I-thought: and who am I? It is of the very essence of the meditation that there is no mental or verbal answer. There cannot be, since the Self transcends thought and words. The answer is only the awakening of the current of awareness, the sense of being, in the heart. And this awareness is neither physical nor mental, though body and mind are both aware of it. It can no more be described than hearing could be described to a deaf man.

If impure thoughts arise during meditation they are to be looked at and dispelled in the same way, for in this way the evil tendencies in one are discovered, seen and dissipated. "All kinds of thoughts arise in meditation. That is only right, for what lies hidden in you is brought out. Unless it rises up how can it be destroyed?"

Every spiritual path requires both purity of living and intensity of spiritual effort, and the *vichara* was given by Bhagavan as a technique of pure and dispassionate living no less than as a technique of meditation. If anything happens to offend or flatter you: Who is injured, who is pleased or angry who am I? The word 'frustration' is much in vogue nowadays, but who is frustrated? So by use of the *vichara,* the I-am-the-doer illusion can be destroyed and it is possible to take part in the life of the world aloofly, without vanity or attachment, being, as St. Paul said, "in the world but not of it." Bhagavan represented it as the bank cashier who handles lakhs of rupees unemotionally and yet quite efficiently because he knows that it is not his money. In the same impersonal way a man can attend to all affairs of life, knowing that he, the real Self, is unaffected by them; and every attack of greed, anger or desire can be dispelled by the *vichara.* It must be dispelled, because it is no use repeating that one is the Self and acting as though one were the ego. Real, even partial, awareness of the Self weakens egoism;

egoism, whether expressed as vanity, greed or desire, is a proof that recognition of the Self is merely mental.

This twofold use of the *vichara* means that the perfect *Jnana-Marga* which Sri Bhagavan brought to the world is also perfect *Karma-Marga.*

What Bhagavan did, and what could not have been done by any but Bhagavan himself, was to give mankind a type of *sadhana* that is peculiarly suited to our modern age. This new dispensation goes even beyond the use of the *vichara* in the relief it gives. It has always been obligatory to the *sadhaka* to adhere strictly to the forms of his religion, whatever this might be, and it has usually been preferable to withdraw from the life of the world. But in the conditions of life in the modern world both these obligations are often difficult and sometimes impossible. and Bhagavan absolved those who followed him from both. He never asked what religion any of his devotees followed or whether they followed any formal religion at all. He never encouraged any to profess Hinduism. He prescribed the *vichara* alike to all who asked him the way, whether Hindus or of any other religion or of none,

In fact by no means all his devotees practised the *vichara.* Many basked in the glow of his love while making some other *sadhana* or without making conscious *sadhana*. His Grace was upon all alike. But for those

who did practise the *vichara* he held it natural for this to supersede all other technique of *sadhana*.

Also, he never encouraged any to give up life in the world. He explained that it would only be exchanging the thought "I am a householder" for the thought "I am a *sannyasin*" whereas what is necessary is to reject the thought "I am the doer" completely and remember only "I am"; and this can be done by means of the *vichara* as well in the city as in the jungle. It is only inwardly that a man can leave the world by leaving the ego-sense; it is only inwardly that he can withdraw into solitude by abiding in the universal solitude of the heart, which is solitude only because there are no others, however many forms the Self may assume.

This was Bhagavan's purpose on earth; the opening of a path that can be followed by the housewife the bank-clerk, the ship's engineer, as well as by the priest or the *sannyasin*.

Upadesa implies also *diksha*. Bhagavan was as categorical as every other Spiritual Master that realization is possible only through a Guru. "It is impossible except at the feet of the Master and in his divine Presence for the seeker to reach and abide in that true and primal state of pure being, or the Self, wherein the mind is entirely subdued and all its activity has completely ceased." Although he admits that in very rare cases no outer Guru may be necessary: "It is very seldom that a person can

realize his true Being without the Grace of the Master." When it was objected to him once that he himself had no Guru he replied simply : " The Guru need not necessarily take human form."

And yet Bhagavan himself did not give initiation in the usual way. When asked whether he was a Guru and gave intiation he always avoided a direct reply. Had the reply been 'no', he would most certainly have said 'no'. But had he said 'yes' he would immediately have been besieged by demands for initiation and would have been driven to make a distinction between disciples and devotees, between those who were drawn to the *sadhana* of the *vichara* and those who were drawn to him simply by love and devotion. And his compassionate love was too great and his wisdom too shrewd to act in a way that would lead some to think that he ranked them higher than others. Indeed, he did not, since he saw the Self in all.

When asked whether he gave initiation, Bhagavan's most usual reply was that there are three types of initiation : by speech, by look and by silence, This left the burden of understanding upon the enquirer. It is an old tradition, the three types being symbolised by the bird, which needs to sit on its eggs in order to hatch them, the fish which needs only to look at them, and the tortoise, which needs only to think of them. Initiation by look or silence is most natural to the *Jnana-Marga.*

Bhagavan gave initiation by look and by silence. Initiation by look was given to those who came to the ashram and were drawn to the use of the *vichara*. It was a concentrated, piercing look which penetrated into the very depths of a man's being. It was frequently given at some time, such as the chanting of the Vedas, when not many would be aware of it. Only such as had experienced the same initiation would be aware what was happening if they chanced to be watching. Initiation by silence was given to those who turned to Bhagavan for guidance but were unable to come physically to Tiruvannamalai. And once there had been initiation the spiritual guidance was precise, subtle and continuous, even though with no word spoken.

This initiation by silence still continues and will continue. This was the purpose of Bhagavan in living in human form among us. He has made true for all mankind what was true for him; that the Guru need not take human form. Christ enunciated a universal law of Divine Mercy when he said that whoever seeks will find; but in order to find it is necessary to be reborn as the spiritual child of a Guru, and in our materialistic age there are few genuine Gurus to be found. Only the presence of Bhagavan on earth could atone for this paucity of spiritual guidance and open a door to those who seek.

Before speaking of the continuance of Bhagavan's *mouna-diksha* it is best to say something, though very

briefly, of the death of his body. For years this body had been tortured by rheumatism. The knees were swollen, and he walked stiff-legged and with difficulty and had to give up his daily walks on the sacred hill, Arunachala. Over a year ago a small tumor appeared on the left elbow. It was cut out but returned worse than before. Then it was recognized as serious. Various kinds of treatment were given, and Bhagavan submitted to whatever was prescribed. Three more times it was cut, and after each operation it returned worse and higher up. Already in December the doctors said they could do no more. The tumor, after four operations, had reached the shoulder and gone inwards. The doctors said that the pain must be excruciating, though Bhagavan seldom gave any sign that he was suffering. The whole system was poisoned, and the last months were one long martyrdom. And yet to the last he insisted that all those who came to him should receive *darshan* twice a day, walking past the room where he lay. At the very end, when every touch was agony, he ordered the attendants to raise him to a sitting posture and he died sitting.

This long agony was not his *karma.* It was our *karma* that he took on himself. The astrologers had seen nothing in his horoscope to indicate that he should die this year, because it was not his *karma.* A lady devotee went to him and implored him to give her the sickness, and he replied: "And who gave it to me?" We did as surely

as though we had crucified him, for it was our *karma* that he took on himself.

A few days before the end of the body he said: "They say that I am dying but I shall still be here." That is why it needs to be proclaimed now that Bhagavan is still here and the doorway opened by him is still open.

Many years ago when Bhagavan was still living in a cave on the hill, some *sadhus* came and asked him for a devotional hymn to help them in their *sadhana.* He walked round the hill with them, and as he walked he composed the supreme hymn 'Arunachala-Siva,' tears streaming from his eyes as he sang it. It has always been the great emotional inspiration of the devotees. Arunachala was his Guru. As soon as he had realized the Self he came to Arunachala and he remained there ever after. He allowed it to be known that he is Arunachala. As he was dying a group of devotees sat outside the little room singing 'Arunachala-Siva.' And that night, when the body that Bhagavan had used and now relinquished was exposed to the view of the devotees in the great hall of the ashram, they sang spontaneously a Tamil verse that he had made long ago, but which had been neglected: "Arunachala-Ramana." He is Arunachala. He is alive at Tiruvannamalai-Arunachala as before. A shrine or temple is to be raised over his *samadhi* which, like his Grace, will be open to devotees of all religions. But although he is Arunachala-Tiruvannamalai

and, as he said "here," at Tiruvannamalai, as before, he is spaceless Arunachala-Śiva and will live in the heart of every devotee who turns to him, initiating and guiding even more actively than before. The pathway that he opened for mankind was not for the duration of his body only; it will grow more evident and his support and guidance more potent now that the restriction of a body has been shed.

THE MAN WHO WAS RAMANA

IT was the most majestic film I have ever seen, the most awe inspiring, and yet without incident. A view of Arunachala hill from the ashram drive, and then a tall, frail, light-complexioned man, with short white hair, descending the slope of the hill with the aid of a staff. Then he was seen coming out of the ashram hall, stopping to smile to a baby, walking across the ashram ground: just simple, everyday actions, and yet beauty of it was breath-taking—the simplicity was so natural, the smile so spontaneous, the majesty so inherent.

His complexion was pale, almost golden, his white hair and beard always short, as the ashram authorities held that he was a *sannyasin* and shaved him every full-moon

day. Emaciated, aged beyond his years with the burden of our sorrows, stiff-kneed with rheumatism, he leaned heavily on his staff as he walked, his eyes cast down. There was an air of modesty, of utter simplicity, of a childlike defencelessness. The mere sight of him walking across the ashram ground was enough to grip the heart.

The story of Sri Bhagavan is of the most simple. Born in a poor Brahmin family in South India, he went to a mission school where he learned a little English. He was a normal, healthy boy, more fond of sport than study. At the age of 17, when any adolescent might pass from boyhood to manhood, the great change came over him. One day a sudden, intense fear of death assailed him, a feeling of the immediate imminence of death. There was none to turn to, none to give help. He decided to face death. Lying rigid upon his bed, he tried to visualise, to dramatise death. He held his breath to make the experience more vivid, thereby unconsciously practising the technique of *pranayama* or breath-control. He said: "Well then, now death is come. What does it mean? This body is dead. It will be carried to the burning ghat and there burnt and reduced to ashes. But with the death of this body am 'I' dead? Is this body 'I'?" All this was not dull thought. Vividly the living truth flashed on him that he was not the inert body nor the thoughts that pass and are gone; he was the eternal 'I,' the deathless Spirit. And in that moment death was dead and he had awakened into Enlightenment

of the eternal Self. A lifetime of striving and *sadhana* was, for him, compressed into that brief moment. Theory he learnt later and recognized it, just as a woman who had born a child might read afterwards about childbirth.

Accounts of his life have been written; it is enough to say here very briefly that his whole manner of living was changed. He lost all interest in worldly things and would fall constantly into immersion in the Bliss of the Self. His elder brother, who was in charge of the family, the father being dead, resented the change and rebuked him one day for behaving like a *sadhu* while enjoying the benefits of family life. The young Ramana recognized the justice of the rebuke and secretly left home and went to the sacred hill of Arunachala where he remained for fifty-four years until, on April 14th, 1950, he parted from the body he had worn.

When he arrived at Arunachala he remained immersed in the effulgence of Bliss, not conscious of his body, not needing it, not speaking or moving and scarcely eating, so that to onlookers it appeared to be the most intense *tapas*.

It was not really *tapas* at all. He was simply ignoring the body he had ceased to need. He himself once indicated that by saying: "I did not eat, so they said I was fasting; I did not speak so they said I was *mouni*." He was already a *Jivan-Mukta* in unwavering

consciousness of identity with the Self and had no *karma* left for which to make *tapas.*

For a while he made his abode in the underground vault of the great temple at Tiruvannamalai and, immersed in *samadhi,* took no heed of the ants, mosquitoes and vermin, though his back and thighs became an open wound from them. Some *sadhus* took him a single cup of thin gruel daily, which was all his food. Finally they carried him out bodily while he was in *samadhi.*

His body was so neglected that it might not have endured long, he might have effortlessly discarded it. So the story would have ended But for us the story began when compassion for those who gathered around, seeking his Grace and guidance, drew him back to a full bodily life. From then on there was a motive for continuing in bodily form—the motive of compassion.

Thereafter he lived for half a century among us, the most simple and natural life, observant, kindly and humorous. No moods of abstraction were needed, because while fully human, he was always fully in *samadhi,* fully Divine, alike when speaking and when sitting silent. His manner of life was of the most normal. He was affable and courteous to all comers. It was no attitude of superiority that bent men's knees before him, for none could be more simple or natural; it was the spontaneous reaction of men to the Divine.

The face of Bhagavan was like the face of water, always changing and yet always the same. He would be laughing and talking, and so infectious was his laughter that even those who did not understand Tamil would spontaneously join in. Then he would turn graciously to a small child or hand a nut to a squirrel that hopped on to his couch from the window, or his radiant, wide-open eyes would shine with love upon some devotee who had just arrived or was taking leave. And then, in silence, a moment later, his face would be rock-like, eternal in its grandeur.

But how can one describe the Divinity that men felt in him? I will quote three statements from the 'Golden Jubilee Souvenir' published by the ashram in 1946, which indicate it to some extent.

"I do not know what happened when I saw Maharshi for the first time, but the moment he looked at me I felt that he was the Truth and the Light." (Grant Duff)

"Though no words passed between us, I felt an indescribable influence and a sense of calmness settling over me I knew that my heart was being irresistibly attracted, as though by a mighty spiritual magnet, towards that Divinity in the human form of Sri Ramana seated on the couch." (Rao Saheb K. K. Nambiar)

"I entered the hall with a strange feeling of diffidence. Had I not heard from ever so many that

though the Maharshi was great (not one who met him ever denied him this tribute) he was a *Jnani* (Man of Knowledge) of the orthodox type as against a *Bhakta* (Devotee)? But when I met him for the first time on that memorable evening somehow it was borne home upon me, even against appearances, that the rumour was unwarranted. For the Maharshi's face was so kind, I may even add soft, with a shade of pensiveness." (Dilip Kumar Roy)

The love that shone in his eyes, the luminous understanding, cannot be described. Some one has came to the ashram broken down with the hopeless grief of bereavement, and Bhagavan, after hearing the story, has simply looked, no word spoken, and peace flood the soul. And again, his eyes would pierce into the very depth of one, and it would be as though they asked: "You have been told; why have you not realized?"

An old pandit who knew Sri Ramana as a boy had visited many *yogis* and decided to visit the Yogi Ramana also and discuss with him. But, standing before the couch, he felt his whole body electrified with awe and, before he knew what had happened, had fallen on his face before him. Litttle children were drawn to him and gladdened by his smile. A cooly picked up a blown sheet of paper and, seeing his picture on it, exclaimed "Bhagavan!" and folded it reverently and took away with him. Animals were drawn to him like people.

Once he came back late from his afternoon walk on the hill, and while devotees clustered in groups or sat waiting or followed him up the hillside, a pair of monkeys came to the doorway of the hall and, forgetting their fear of people, came inside and gazed anxiously at the vacant couch. A monkey that has been tended by humans is ostracised by its fellows on its return to wild life, but any that had been tended by Bhagavan was gladly received. Having transcended the ego, he had transcended fear and antagonism, and the animals sensed this. A poisonous snake crept over his leg and he did not move or shrink. When the devotees asked him what it felt like to have a snake pass over one he replied, loughing: "Cold and moist."

Bhagavan's daily life was conducted with a punctiliousness that Indians today would have to call pure Western. In everything he was precise, orderly, matter-of-fact. The ashram hall was swept out several times daily. The books were always in their places The cloths covering the couch were scrupulously clean and beautifully folded. The loincloth, which was all that Bhagavan wore, was gleaming white. The two clocks in the hall were adjusted daily to radio time. The calendar was never allowed to fall behind the date. The routine of life flowed to an exact pattern.

During the last few years the pattern was as follows: At five o'clock in the morning the hall (in which Bhagavan

had been sleeping on the couch) was opened and devotees came in and sat in meditation while the *Vedas* were chanted. At six he went to the bathroom and at seven there was breakfast in the ashram dining hall. Devotees sat before him again in the hall from eight till eleven with a break of about half an hour at 10 o'clock. Sometimes all sat silent, and the silence was vibrant with his Grace. It was a peace and fulness in which words would be a distraction; or it was an intense spiritual striving watched and guided by him, though he seemed to take no notice. Sometimes it happened that some one would ask questions or sing in praise of Bhagavan. The mail arrived between nine and ten, and Bhagavan would read letters and look at newspapers, yet without breaking the current of silence in the hearts of those whom he was guiding. He did not answer letters himself but handed them over to the ashram office, and the replies were submitted to him for approval in the afternoon.

Often he would talk and laugh with those present, and his talk was usually full of laughter. Right to the end he joked, and yet his jokes also bore instruction. When the doctors were alarmed to see a new growth of tumor pushing up in his final sickness, he said, laughingly: "Why do you worry? It's its nature to come up." When a woman beat her head with grief outside his room, despite his insistence that the body's dissolution was no cause for grief, he listened carefully and then said: "Oh, I thought somebody was trying

to break a coconut." A devotee asked why his prayers were not answered, and Bhagavan replied, laughing: "If they were you might stop praying."

Lunch was at eleven, and during the last years Bhagavan consented to rest his frail body for a while after lunch, so the hall was closed to devotees. Their loss was the squirrels' gain, for the whole floor was strewn with nuts. Devotees came to the hall again from three to nearly five, when Bhagavan used to walk on the hill for about half an hour. But during the last two years or so he was too infirm. His knees were swollen with rheumatism and he could only walk very slowly across the ashram grounds. Before 5-30 the chanting of the *Vedas* began again. At 6-30 the women left the ashram, and an hour later the men.

The consideration that Bhagavan showed to people and animals extended also to inanimate objects. Every action had to be performed worthily and nothing was to be wasted. I have seen the meticulous care with which a book was bound or a cutting pasted and have heard an attendant reproved for wanting to cut into a new sheet of paper for the purpose when one already started could be made to suffice. Our exploitation of Nature is ruthless today; it is more a rape than a harvesting; and it was a chastening sight to see the Divine Man so careful in the use of things. Food especially was never wasted. A gift of fruit might be distributed

to any children who were present or to the monkeys who tried to steal it, but nothing of it was to be wasted. It is a mistaken notion that economy goes with parsimony and generosity with extravagance; very often the parsimonious are wasteful and the generous careful. When Bhagavan had finished a meal the banana leaf off which he had eaten it was as clean as though it had been washed. Not a grain of rice was wasted. In former years, when his body was more robust, he himself used to help in the kitchen, preparing meals; and he insisted that even the parings of the vegetables should be used as cattle feed and not thrown away.

Although he was an absolute King and all craved to obey him, Bhagavan's life was, notwithstanding, a lesson in submission. Owing to his refusal to express any wish or desire, the ashram authorities built up their own structure of regulations. and Bhagavan obeyed them without demur; so that if any devotee found them irksome he had before his eyes the example of Bhagavan's own submission. If ever Bhagavan resisted it was likely to be in the interests of the devotees, and even so it was usually in silence and very often in a manner dictated by his shrewd sense of humour. An attendant once rebuked a European woman for sitting with her legs stretched out. Bhagavan at once sat up cross-legged and continued so despite the pain caused by the rheumatism in his knees. When the devotees protested he replied that the attendant's orders were for every one, and it was only

when the lady was asked to sit in whatever posture was comfortable that he also consented to do so.

But it was not only submission to regulations; it was submission to all the conditions of life and to pain and sickness which he could have put aside by a mere thought but which he endured for our sake and to teach us silently that pain cannot disturb the equanimity of one who abides in the Self. Throughout the long and painful sickness that finally killed his body he submitted loyally, one ofter another, to the doctors who were put in charge, never complaining, never asking for a change of treatment. If ever there was any inclination to try a different treatment it was only so that those who recommended it should not be disappointed: and even then it was made dependent on the consent of the ashram authorities. If there is a tendency today to regard submission as spiritless it is only because egoism is regarded as natural. Doubtless, it is more spirited to fight for one's desires than to submit to their denial, but Bhagavan was showing us the way to freedom from desires. Such freedom is not the submission of the abject; it is the joy of concord, for it is the Self, not a stranger, to whom one submits.

Bhagavan sought to free us from psychic as well as physical desires, and he therefore disapproved of all freakishness and eccentricity and of all interest in visions and desire for powers. He liked his devotees to behave in a normal and sane way. For he

was guiding us towards the ultimate Reality where perceptions and powers which men call 'higher' or 'miraculous' are as illusory as those they call 'physical.' A visitor once related how his Guru died and was buried and then, three years later, returned in tangible bodily form to give instructions. Bhagavan sat unheeding. It was as though he had not heard. The bell rang for lunch and he rose to leave the hall. Only at the doorway he turned and quoted: "Though a man can enter ever so many bodies, does it mean that he has found his true Home?" One of the most delightful examples of his humour was when he was asked whether, if somebody who desired certain powers obtained Moksha directly through the force of his *sadhana*, he would automatically acquire the powers he had wished for. Bhagavan replied: "If he obtained *Mokṣha* it would not harm him even if he did have powers."

Nothing could be more simple and unostentatious than Bhagavan's mode of life. He called nothing his. He never asked for anything. He accepted the food and clothing that was necessary, that was all. The only outer gifts that one could make were fruit and flowers. And gifts were taken to the dining hall and shared among all equally. Bhagavan refused to have any special consideration shown to him. If those who were sitting in the hall made to rise when he entered he motioned to them almost impatiently to remain seated. I have seen him refuse to have an electric fan switched on because

the devotees would not benefit equally. Afterwards ceiling fans were installed and all benefited alike. An attendant was placing a quarter mango on each person's leaf and slipped a half mango on to that of Bhagavan and he angrily put it back and took a small piece.

One can say 'angrily' because he could show anger at misdemeanours on the part of attendants. They were small outer lapses that called for small outer disapproval; but with regard to the failures and shortcomings of the devotees his patience was inexhaustible. He never asked any to comeor told any to go. He never pressed any to stay. And yet he watched over each one with the loving solicitude of a mother for her only child.

There was never any question among the devotees what mood he was in, for he had no moods. How could he, when he was living in bodily form for our sake not for his, and when he never for a moment mistook the form for the Reality? He merely responded according to the need of those who approached him, and therefore each one felt that he enjoyed his especial Grace. It was only after staying for a while that the more observant began to perceive that every devotee enjoyed his especial Grace. Being established immutably in the Reality beyond all forms, he saw forms and events not with the inherent and graded importance that they seem to bear for us but sympathetically, with the importance that we gave them. And since each one thought his own

problems important, each was delighted to find Bhagâvan appreciating their importance. Pandits were sitting in the hall with Sanskrit texts which, now and again, they took up to Bhagavan to elucidate some point. A three-year-old boy, not to be outdone, took up his book fo nursery rhymes; and Bhagavan was no less gracious, showed no less interest. But the book was tattered, so he took it and supervised its mending and binding and gave it back next day renovated.

And yet sometimes he deliberately did not recognize the importance of men's problems, for his ultimate purpose was to ween them from attachment to things and events. One of the ashram staff died. His wife who had been on a visit and knew nothing about it came home in the evening and found him dead, and she could not control her grief. Bhagavan said: "What is she grieving about? Nothing is changed." He said the same many times during the long months when his own body was approaching death.

To all he showed unfailing courtesy. Each comer felt himself at once at home, even though with no word spoken. If he greeted a newcomer in words it was usually to ask: 'Have you eaten?" It was the first question he put to a visiting doctor a few days before the body's end, when the pain was excruciating. And yet, behind the constant equal courtesy, there was detailed individual supervision of each devotee whose inner submission he had recognized. At first such a one might be encouraged

with the daily attention of a smile and a friendly look. And then, for weeks or months, he might be apparently ignored, with only an occasional swift glance while he sat in meditation. If his ego had fed on the previous attention and he had imagined himself better and more favoured than others the apparent neglect might be a bitter *tapas.* When wisdom and steadiness began to come he would receive an occasional smile of recognition or a deeper, fuller look from those radiant eyes of love.

It was not often that devotees spent the whole day in the ashram hall. Many of them were householders living in the small colony of bungalows that had sprung up around the ashram, and they had their work and housekeeping to attend to. Some could come only in the early morning and evening There were also many who lived in other towns, where they had their work, and could come only for an occasional visit. Even the *sadhus* had to procure and prepare their food, for it was usually only visitors and newcomers who were invited to take their meals at the ashram. This kind of life accorded well with the large element of *karma-marga* in Bhagavan's teaching. Meditation on the inner Self and devotion to the Self manifested as Sri Ramana was stabilised by daily effort to cast off attachment and deny the ego in the work and relationships of life. Otherwise conditions would have been different, for, although Bhagavan gave no injunctions, everything shaped itself according to his will.

There were many who desired him to give injunctions, both for their own lives and for the ashram management, but he would not. The most he would do was to show approval or disapproval of what was done or of any project that was announced to him, and even that not always. If asked point blank he would probably keep silent or reply: "If you want to do it, do."

And yet his solicitous supervision did in fact cover the actions also of those who had submitted to him, and his approval or disapproval was usually clear enough, without being so explicit that stray comers who had not put themselves in his hands should demand that they also be given instructions. A devotee announced his plan to leave Tiruvannamalai and take up a job with a regular salary. Bhagavan replied, laughing: "Every one is free to make plans." The plan did not come off. An attendant admired one of the political leaders of India and wished to go to Madras to see him when he paid a visit there. He asked permission, but the face of Bhagavan remained like stone and there was no reply. He went. He rushed from meeting to meeting, each time just missing the leader or failing to gain admission. He came back without seeing him, and Bhagavan teased him good - humouredly "So you went to Madras without permission? Did you have a successful trip?" A few months after my arrival I had business in a neighbouring town and, imagining that the wordly affairs of a devotee would not interest Bhagavan, I simply a sked permission to go for the day.

Bhagavan gave permission but afterwards said to one of the older devotees : "Osborne asked leave for the day but did not say why he wanted to go." I was told and made a full report and in future always explained my affairs.

It might be asked why such hidden methods of guidance were necessary, why Bhagavan should not have given plain instructions. The most obvious answer would be that his grace and courtesy to all comers was such that he did not wish to make an invidious distinction between them and the devotees who had placed their lives in his hands and thereby acquired a right to his guidance Nor did he wish to provoke open questions. as to his quality of Guru or justify indiscriminate demands for guidance, since, as I have explained in 'Ramana-Arunachala', this was to be understood by those who went beyond words. But there was also a deeper, more essential answer. "By their fruit ye shall know them. " A man's words and actions are the fruit of his nature. Bhagavan's silent teaching, working direct upon the heart, sought to rectify the devotee's nature, and as a result sound fruit would spring from a sound tree. Control of his actions would have been a more external method, working from effect to cause rather than from cause to effect. It was best for the devotee to seek the true answer to a problem or way out of a situation in his heart, like a schoolboy doing a sum and bringing the answer up to his teacher; and then there would be a

smile of approval and encouragement if the sum had been rightly solved, and if not it had to be worked out afresh; to have told the answer would have helped the schoolboy much less in his work.

There may also be the question of general injunctions applicable to all alike, such as each religion imposes on its followers, but these would also have been inappropriate, since, as I have explained in 'The Direct Path', the purpose of Bhagavan was neither to found a new religion nor to restore the integrity of an existing one, but to open a path for all who turned to him from all religions. For instance, he has, on occasion, stressed the importance of a *sattvic* diet, and yet many of his non-Hindu devotees were meat-eaters, and he did not disapprove. When told by a visitor that *sattvic* diet proved insufficient to keep up the health, he has replied: "Eat whatever you need". And yet this same question of meat-eating can be taken as an example of the silent influence of Bhagavan that rendered the crude compulsion of commands unnecessary; for it has often happened that devotees have come as meat-eaters and, with no word spoken to discourage them therefrom, have gradually come to find such diet unsuited to them and have given it up.

Towards the end, Bhagavan was aged far more than his years. He looked more liked 90 than 70. In one who had a strong constitution, who had scarcely known sickness except for the rheumatism of his last years,

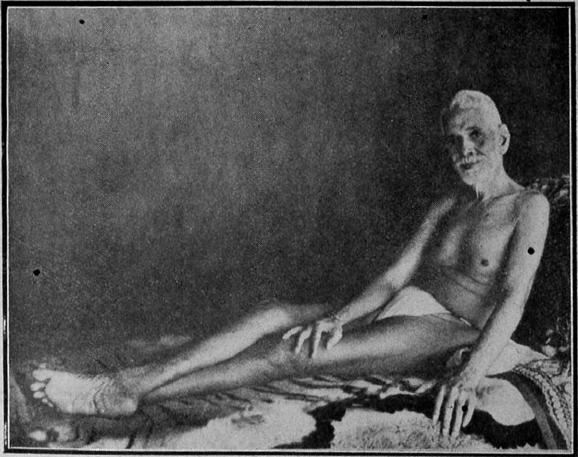
and who was impervious to grief or worry, anxiety, hope or regret, this would appear incredible; but it was the burden of his compassion. "He who taketh upon himself the sins of the world." Devotees came and sat before him burdened with sorrows, tormented with doubts, darkened with impurities, and as they sat, felt themselves heart-free and lightened. How many have come and sat before him weighed down with the grief of failure or bereavement, and the light of his eyes has dissolved their pain and, as they sat there, they have felt a wave of peace flood their heart. How many have come primed with questions which seemed to them all-important and which their thought and reading had failed to solve; it might be in desperate hope or as a challenge that they brought the questions, but as they sat there the questioning mind itself was brought to tranquility and the questions faded out and no longer needed to be asked. And then, if they opened their hearts, a deeper understanding was implanted there. Those who sought refuge in him felt the burden of their karma lifted; and it was he who bore the burden. Even physical ailments have been known to diminish or disappear in his presence and to appear reflected in his own body.

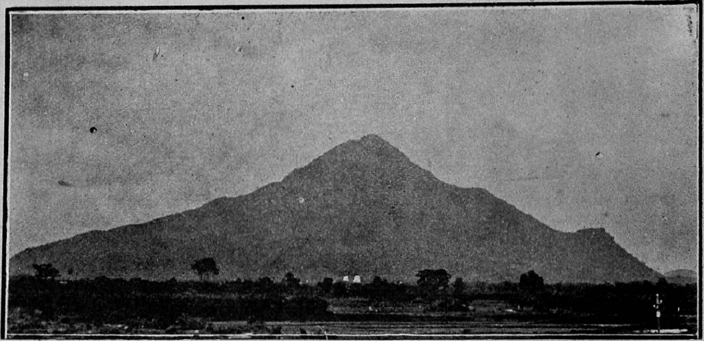
Even the way of his discarding the body was supremely compassionate. There were many who believed that they could not endure or survive it. But when the sickness dragged on month after month, after the doctors had found it incurable and had declared that

the pain must be intense although Bhagavan did not show it, they became reconciled to its ending through death. Many a time one or another implored him to desire to be well, but in their hearts they knew that he would use no powers that they themselves could not use. Indeed, had he consented it would have been a boon of a few years only, whereas the boon he granted was for all time, and beyond time, for he said: "I am not going away. Where could I go?" Where, indeed, for he is Bhagavan. We shall not again see the Divine Grace in human form or the love shining in his eyes, but in our hearts he is with us and will not leave us. His Grace continues to be poured out, not only on those who know the miracle of his bodily form, but on all who turn to him in their hearts, now as before.

I have not given a clear picture of the man who was Ramana, but how can one portray the universal? What impressed one was his complete unselfconsciousness, like that of a little child, his Divinity and intense humanity. The Divinity was recognized in the act of prostration and in addressing him in the third person as 'Bhagavan.' To have said 'you' would have been a jarring assertion of otherness. In speaking of himself Bhagavan spoke very simply and said 'I' or "this". Only occasionally, when the meaning clearly indicated it, did he use the third person: "If you remember Bhagavan, Bhagavan will remember you." "Even if you let go of Bhagavan, Bhagavan will never let go of you."

He was unperturbed whatever happened; the majesty of his countenance was inexpressible; and yet it is no less true that he was swift and spontaneous in response and that his face was the most human, the most living, one had ever seen. He attained Realization without learning and never displayed erudition, and yet he had made himself better versed in the scriptures than the pandits who came to him for elucidations. He was all compassion, and yet his countenance might appear immovable, like stone. He was all love, and yet for weeks together he might not favour a devotee with a single look or smile. He replied to all graciously, and yet many trembled and feared to speak to him. His features were not good, and yet the most beautiful face looked trivial beside him. He often appeared scarcely to notice devotees, and yet his guidance was as unremitting then as it is now.





THE WISH-FULFILLING HILL

THERE is an old saying that the sacred hill of Arunachala is wish-fulfilling. I heard of it first in a remarkable way. I was then almost a newcomer and was making my first *pradakshina* of the hill. A more veteran devotee of Sri Bhagavan was walking, beside me and said: "You must be careful not to wish for anything while on hill or walking round it, because Arunachala is wish-fulfilling".

Anywhere else the saying would have sounded absurd. One would have laughed and said: "But surely that is just the reason why I should wish for something!" But one whose heart had opened to the spirit of Sri Bhagavan's teaching understood full well. There are modes and levels of spiritual aspiration on which petitions and wishes are perfectly justified so long as the petitioner sincerely believes them to be for the good—even petitions for a change of fortune making for his mundane happiness

or welfare and, far more, petitions of an unselfish nature. But Bhagavan sought, like Buddha, to free us not so much from our misfortunes as from the wishes and desires, the fears and attachments, which make misfortunes possible. Therefore, to come to him or to Arunachala with a wish was to deny his teaching. It was the path of pure Advaita that he taught, the highest, the most serene. There was no compromise, no half-measure The illusory ego-self had to be denied, so how could one ask for any boons for it? True, those who responded to the teaching were still enmeshed in hopes and fears, still very far from having dissolved the illusion, but the least they could do was to recognize that the hopes and fears were illusions and strive to put them aside, not ask the help of Bhagavan in indulging them.

Described in words, this sounds a hard path and makes Bhagavan appear a hard Master, but he was all love. It was his Grace that made misfortunes dwindle and took the sting from fear. It was he who bore the burden It was the magnitude of his love and the serenity permeating the heart in his presence that made desires and afflictions dwindle until to pray for them seemed an unworthy act, The depth of compassion in his eyes at any misfortune or impending misfortune would heal the heart of the sufferer. And yet, behind it, was

the silent urging to give up attachments, to turn from the ever-frustrated ego to the ever-blissful Self, it was compassion for suffering but even more for the ignorance that made suffering possible.

It was a very real thing, this silent teaching. I remember sitting before him in the ashram hall at a time when his teaching had not yet become part of the heart's beat and receiving an offensive letter. I was hurt and mortified by it's tone. Not knowing why, I looked up and saw his eyes upon me with a compassionate but slightly quizzical smile, and it was as though deft fingers had smoothed out the chagrin in my heart. Immediately the thought arose: "What does it matter? Who is offended?" And there was peace of heart. How could there be any wish or any petition to be able to retaliate or to gain the ascendancy when the whole rancour and humiliation had been smoothed away? This may seem a petty instance, but the ego is as tenacious in petty matters as in great, if not more so. Greater instances might also be cited—of bereavement or of wordly insecurity—but never was there any prayer to change the course of events. Always there was the feeling that it would have been disloyal to Bhagavan. Only there was the aspiration to love, to submit, to be open to his immeasurable Grace.

And yet, it might be suggested, this path of pure understanding was only for the philosophers and intellectuals; surely the simple folk, rich and poor, who came

to Bhagavan came with prayers and petitions and with wishes to be fulfilled. I do not believe they did: they felt the silent flood of Grace, peace permeated their hearts, and their attachment to whatever had caused bitterness or anxiety was transmuted into love for Bhagavan. A simple minded woman said: "I don't understand the philosophy but when he looks at me I feel just like a child in its mother's arms". A business-man, speaking of miracles, said proudly: "My Bhagavan doesn't give a hoot for such things". It was only a little more outward. Those who were not drawn to seek the Self in the heart were drawn by love to the Self manifested as Sri Ramana. And he said: "Submission to God, Guru and Self is the same and is all that is needed." They felt that he did not wish them to ask for things, and his love was so much more precious than any boon they could have asked for that it dissolved the petition and left them poor and open-hearted before him.

But did none ever pray for boons? Such a question can hardly be answered. Openly, I have not known it happen except by children, and their prayers were graciously heard, and fulfilled, because for them it is natural to invest happenings with reality. In thought it may have happened and when it did I very much suspect that the boons were granted and proved roses with many

thorns. It is better not to wish at Arunachala, because the wish may be fulfilled and, if it is, any impurity or egoism that lay concealed in it will bear bitter fruit and the boon will prove a burden.

This is not past history. It is because Arunachala is the centre of the highest, purest path that Bhagavan took up his abode there. Arunachala is *Siva* Manifested, the Destroyer of otherness in the fire of Union. "Unite with me to destroy (the duality of) you and me and bless me with the state of ever-vibrant joy, Oh Arunachala" Bhagavan taught devotees to sing. *Dakshinamurthi*, who is *Siva*, sits eternally beneath a huge tree on the north flank of the hill and teaches in silence, but in a spot inaccessible to climbers, even as Sri Ramana, who is *Siva*, does now at his *samadhi*, accessible to all, at the south side of the hill. The old saying that it is sufficient to be born at Tiruvarur or die at Banaras or even think of Arunachala refers to the *mouna-diksha*, the silent transmission of Grace for which physical presence is not needed. But to "think of Arunachala" means to turn to the Destroyer of desires and to renounce all petitions.

Yet although bodily presence is not necessary it is an immense aid. If it were not, *Siva* would not have needed to manifest as Arunachala or as Sri Ramana. The Grace of Bhagavan radiates from Arunachala and from his shrine there no less than it did from his bodily

form. People will be drawn as they were to his Presence and, just the same, they will feel their doubts and questions melting away and their wishes dissolved in love. Again and again one sees that the Grace poured out upon them affects their circumstances in life also and the inner harmony is reflected outwardly, but always on condition of not asking, of not going for that purpose. It is in that sense that Arunachala is wish-fulfilling and that it is better not to ask.

THE LITERARY TESTIMONY

OF BHAGAVAN SRI RAMANA

IT is natural to an age like ours, where the mind seems more than the Spirit, to judge the influence of a Teacher by the written records he leaves; but this yardstick dose not always measure true. Christ wrote nothing. When Lao-Tsu declared his life-work finished and rode away to the west, he also had written nothing. The warden of the Pass of Han Kow, through which he had to ride, begged him to set down his teaching, so he stayed at the gateway to the town and wrote the Tao Te King, which became the Scripture of Taoism. It is an amusing reflection that had he not done so modern scholars would not have failed to dispute his existence and represent him as a fictitious person.

In the case of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi there are published works and something should be known about them, while remembering that they are not the real legacy. He taught in silence and continues to do so from his *samadhi* at Tiruvannamalai and in the hearts of those who turn to him. When asked once why he did not go about preaching the Truth to people at large, he replied:

"How do you know I am not doing so? Does preaching consist in mounting a platform and haranguing the people around? Preaching is simple communication of Knowledge, and it can really be done in silence only. What do you think of a man who listens to a sermon for an hour and goes away without having been impressed by it so as to change his life? Compare him with another who sits in a holy Presence and goes away after some time with his outlook on life totally changed. Which is better; to preach loudly without effect or to sit silently, sending out inner Force? Again, how does speech arise? There is pure Knowledge, whence arises the ego, which in turn gives rise to thought, and thought to the spoken word. So the word is the great-grandson of the orginal Source. If the word can produce effect, judge for yourself how much more powerful must be preaching through silence." All that is said here about preaching obviously applies equally to writing.

Silent teaching is indeed natural to the *Jnana-Marga* where theory is at a minimum, being reduced to the one

all-absorbing statement of Advaita: that there is only the Self. That is why it was the method of the original Taoism before Chang Tao Ling developed a Taoist system of cosmology and priesthood in the first century of the Christian Era.

And it was a method which had already made Taoism the hidden controlling influence of the Empire.

Teaching by silence did not mean that Sri Bhagavan was unwilling to explain to those who asked. He always answered doctrinal questions fully and a certain number of his answers have been noted down and published by the Ashram. Only it must be remembered that these verbal explanations were not the real teaching; they were the preliminary explanations which are easy to understand but whose understanding does not in itself enlighten the heart. The real work is the awakening of Self-awareness in the heart, and this was and is made possible by the powerful yet subtle action of the silent Grace of Bhagavan.

Since his real teaching was by silence Sri Bhagavan very seldom made any doctrinal statement except in answer to a question. For the same reason he very seldom wrote anything. Most of the books published as his are mere records of question and answer noted down at the time and subsequently published, but always with his approval. In this category are: 'Sat-Darshana Bhashya,'

'Sri Ramana Gita,' 'A Catechism of Instruction,' and the two volumes entitled 'Maharshi's Gospel'. The only prose volumes actually written by Sri Bhagavan are 'Who Am I?' and 'Self-Enquiry,' written for the instruction of devotees who asked for explanation in the very early years when Sri Bhagavan was still *mouni.* Apart from that there are four volumes of verse: 'Thirty Verses', 'Forty Verses' with 'Supplement', recently republished under the title 'Truth Revealed', 'Five Hymns to Arunachala' and a paraphrase of 42 verses of the Bhagavad Gita. All these books are very small and they are all published by and obtainable at the Ashram at Tiruvannamalai.

It is probable that at least one more book of the first type will appear, since for a period of about two years after the second world war one of the devotees kept a constant record of questions and answers and these have not yet been published. They will explain nothing new, since the teaching of Sri Bhagavan never changed but they will probably explain from different angles and light up new facets of the same teaching. And in this connection, it must be stressed that there is absolutely no change or 'development' in the exposition of Sri Bhagavan over the fifty odd years of his teaching. He was not a philosopher and had no system of thought to expound. He was a *Jivan-Mukta* indicating the way to Self-realization and guiding men thereto in silence.

These books, in their English form, do not record the exact words of Sri Bhagavan, but they do record exactly his teaching. Those that were written by him were written in Tamil, and the compilations also recorded answers mostly given in Tamil, even though the questions were put in English. Although Sri Bhagavan understood English, he gave all but very short replies through an interpreter, listening carefully the while and pulling him up at the slightest mistranslation. So far as concerns accuracy of meaning there is the further guarantee that all the books were revised by Sri Bhagavan with meticulous care before going to print.

The substance of the expositions is therefore, completely reliable, but not so their style. On the whole a rather sedate style has been used, with occasional touches of biblical phraseology.

This does not apply to all the books or all parts of them, and it is expected to be rectified in future editions, but it might give the impression that Bhagavan spoke with pontifical gravity, whereas actually his replies were always given in a matter-of-fact tone and usually with laughter. In fact the replies were not the real answer: that came over the heart in a wave of peace and certitude after the mind had ceased its clamouring, as it may also come to the reader of the printed page.

Also, it must be borne in mind that the replies were very much *ad hominem.* Without losing their general truth in any way, they vary much according to the mental equipment of the questioner. They are shrewd also. When a theosophist asked whether Bhagavan approved of the search for invisible masters, the reply came with laughter and lightning wit. "If they are invisible how can you see them?"

This drove the questioner to the statement: "In consciousness." To which the real reply came: "In consciousness there are no others." For by "Consciousness" Bhagavan meant, not thought, but awareness of the Self.

The best use of the books is to take them up and read on until one comes to a sentence which removes a doubt or touches a chord in the heart and use it as a key to meditation. As meditation becomes more natural and spontaneous the book will become less necessary. And, in this connection, it is well to remember that it was usually newcomers who asked questions. For the most part, those who strove by way of the *vichara* never asked for verbal instruction at all. To read the books for mental satisfaction or in search of a system of philosophy is useless, bacause Sri Bhagavan had no intention of satisfying curiosity or encouraging speculation. He wrote and spoke only to help and guide men in their *sadhana*, and there is no point in reading the books except as a

guide to *sadhana*. In general, the prose books should be regarded less as the teaching of Bhagavan than as a commentary on his teaching. They outline the theory and doctrine of *Jnana-marga*, which is not taught in words but in silence; and they give instructions for the large element of *Karma-marga* in the path he prescribed, which must be lived, not merely learnt.

However, the verse books have a more direct potency. 'The Thirty Verses' were sung morning and evening with the Vedas and were thereby recognized as having a scriptural character, as also have the 'Forty Verses' and the 'Supplement' that Bhagavan later added to them. They are as concise as they are profound, and on each verse a treatise could be written.

> "That only is Knowledge in which there is no knowing or not knowing. To know is not true Knowledge. The Self is Knowledge, for It shines with nothing else to know or to make known. It is not a negation."

'The Thirty Verses' and the 'Forty Verses' are indeed the scripture of Advaita and of the *Jnana-marga* of Self-enquiry. The 'Five Hymns' may also be considered scriptural in character, but in them the element of bhakti is more prominent. Since Bhagavan spoke always of Knowledge and Self enquiry when asked about the Goal or the way, few except those who approached him personally realized what a powerful support devotion was

in his teaching. As the verse quoted above shows, knowledge in the ordinary sense of a link between knower and known is not Knowledge as he meant it. That Knowledge is being the self-effulgent Self. And the approach to it is through love as well as Self-enquiry. Self-enquiry is the mind's attempt to turn inwards, and it is love that draws the mind inwards. Knowledge of one by another and love of one by another are alike incomplete, but in their perfection Love and Knowledge are the same. Love for Bhagavan and Self-enquiry are the two ropes pulling the mind of his devotee back towards the Self. Therefore it may be said that the greatest and most potent record of Bhagavan's teaching and guidance to meditation is not any written word but the photographs he allowed to be disseminated, in which the beauty of countenance, the love and compassion, grip the heart, and the wisdom in the eyes stirs the mind out of itself and urges it to plunge deep into Reality. A picture of Bhagavan, even more than a verse from his songs, may be the key and starting point to meditation as he enjoined it and under his guidance.

The doctrine of Love and its identity with Knowledge is most fully contained in 'Arunachala-Siva', the first of the 'Five Hymns'. While he was still living in a cave on the hill, some *sadhus* came and asked Bhagavan for a devotional hymn, and he walked round the sacred hill with them and composed 'Arunachala-Siva' as he walked, tears streaming down his face while he sang it.

It is the great emotional support of the devotees, the most ecstatic and profound song of Divine Union of Lover and Beloved, the supreme hymn where Love and Knowledge, *Bhakti* and *Jnana*, are fused in one.

> "In my unloving self Thou didst create a passion for Thee, therefore forsake me not, Oh Arunachala!"

Wherever the devotees are gathered together it is sung. It was sung while life was leaving the body, and just before the end, Bhagavan opened his radiant eyes in recognition and two tears of bliss trickled down his cheeks.

This study would not be complete without some mention of the books about Sri Bhagavan. Undoubtedly the book that has done most to make him known, both in India and the West, is Paul Brunton's 'Search in Secret India'. The best biography in English is 'Sri Maharshi' by M. S. Kamath. It is a simple and striking narrative, though unfortunately ending shortly after the time when Bhagavan came down from his abode on the hill to the present ashram. Delightful vignettes of the later years are contained in 'Letters from Sri Ramanashram', written in Telugu by a lady devotee and translated into English. The most widely appreciated expositions of the teaching of Bhagavan are 'Maha-Yoga' by 'Who' and the exposition by the great pundit and poet Ganapati Muni in 'Sat-Darshana Bhashya'.

There is an extensive literature about Bhagavan in the various Indian languages. One series of poems especially should be mentioned.

Many years ago, while he was still living in the Virupaksha cave on the hill, before the present ashram premises were built, a visitor came and stayed five days and on each day composed a Tamil hymn in praise of Bhagavan. It was obvious from the light in Bhagavan's eyes as he regarded him that he had won his Grace. Before leaving he gave his name and said that he came from Satyamangalam, but later, when enquiries were made there, nobody had heard of him, and it was remarked that, apart from being the name of a township, the word means 'Abode of Blessedness' or 'Place of Truth.' He never returned. Countless hymns to Bhagavan have been composed, but these five continued to be sung, and one of them: 'Ramana Sad-Guru', has become a devotional support second only to 'Arunachala-Siva'. It has been suggested that he was an emissary from a hidden spiritual centre come to pay homage to Bhagavan and to hail him as the Sad-Guru of the age. Once, when 'Ramana Sad-Guru' was being sung, Bhagavan himself joined in; the devotee who sang it laughed and said that he had never before heard any one singing his own praise, to which Bhagavan replied: "Why should Ramana be limited to these six feet? Ramana is universal." It is a pity that no English translation has yet been published

AFFINITY WITH BUDDHISM

IT is reported that Bhagavan Sri Ramana was once asked why the Lord Buddha refused to answer question about the after life and that he replied :"Perhaps he was more concerned with the real work of guiding man towards Self-realization than with satisfying useless curiosity". There is a very great similarity between the teaching of this *Jivan-Mukta* born in modern times and that of the Blessed One. And there could be no better proof that it was the pure essence of Hindu spirituality that the Buddha taught, leaving aside only the accidentals.

I am not referring to Buddhist cosmology, which, indeed, figures much less in the teaching of the Buddha

than in that of his later exponents, but to the great central theme of his teaching: that attachment to illusion binds man to the cycle of birth and death and to suffering, and that Enlightenment brings release. Naturally, this basic truth can be found in one form or another in all spiritual teaching, but in that of the Buddha, as of Sri Bhagavan, it is the central theme. As a result, there was in both cases, the direct injunction to turn from illusion and seek Enlightenment rather than the more indirect promise of reward for virtue and threat of punishment for sin. I say "more indirect" not only because such teaching cloaks under a moral appeal what can be presented more simply as pure law of cause and effect, but also because it fastens the eyes and aspirations of its followers on states intermediary between this world and the Absolute Reality of the Self or Nirvana, states which, though higher and more real than the present life, are also illusory in the ultimate truth of Advaita.

This refusal to prescribe any lesser goal or recognize any contingent reality made Sri Bhagavan, like the Buddha, unwilling to speak about the after-life. When asked: "What shall I be when I die?" he answered: "Why do you want to know what you will be when you die before you know what you are now? First find out what you are now." That is to say: seek the ultimate truth of the Self which alone is behind the appearance of this or any other life. He even said explicitly: "But people do not like even to hear of this

Truth, whereas they are eager to know what lies beyond, about heaven and hell and reincarnation. Because people love mystery and not the Truth, religions cater to them so as to eventually bring them round to the Self. Whatever be the means adopted, you must at last return to the Self, so why not abide in the Self here and now?"

Preoccupation with higher and yet still contingent states implies teaching on the level of reality on which the Self is God, and the worshipper is separate from God; but in the ultimate Truth there is no duality. Therefore, when asked about God, Bhagavan replied: "Why do you want to know what God is before you know what you are? First find out what you are." That is: why stop at even the highest manifestation of the Self? Seek the ultimate Truth of the Self which you are. Nay more, he has even been heard to say: "There is no Ishwara," or, as he put it more explicitly: "There is no God apart from the Self, for if there were he would be a Self-less God, which would be absurd."

True, Bhagavan often spoke of God, but that was a concession to ignorance, for so long as the conception of the individual self as a real and separate being continues, the conception of God as the Creator, Lover and Judge of that being must also continue. Bhagavan was willing to speak to each person in the idiom of that person's understanding, but to those who would open their hearts to his teaching he pronounced

only the final truth: that there is no God and no you apart from the Self.

If some who call themselves Buddhists and others who attack Buddhism dub the Buddha's refusal to speak of God 'atheism' and his refusal to describe the after-life 'materialism,' that is mere ignorance: below the level of God-and-man is the illusion of the ego alone, as above it is the Reality of the Self alone; below the appearance of higher worlds is that of this physical world, as above it is the Formless Self; and they have mistaken the lowest for the highest.

Like the Buddha, Sri Bhagavan also refused to speak about the state (if it can be so called) of the *Jnani*, that is of *Nirvana*, for it would be to define the indefinable. When asked about the bodily consciousness of the *Jnani*, he would reply: "You think the *Jnani* has a body", or "Why worry about the *Jnani* before you know what you are? First find out what you are." And when you have found out that you know, because you are the *Jnani*. Theoretical explanations do not help and may even impede the aspirant by gratifying the mind instead of turning it inwards in quest of the Self in which it merges. Mental speculation is not the least of the ego's defences against spiritual effort. And when the effort is directed to That which is beyond the mind it would be a contradiction to try to elucidate it to the mind. It would be like trying to put the ocean in a bucket. Bhagavan

said: "The Self is self-effulgent. One need give it no mental picture, anyway. The thought that imagines is itself bondage. Because the Self is the Effulgence transcending darkness and light, one should not think of it with the mind. Such imagination will end in bondage, whereas the Self is spontaneously shining as the Absolute"

Verbally, there is a contradiction between the teaching of Sri Bhagavan and that of the Buddha in that Sri Bhagavan declared that there is only Atma, while the Buddha declared that there is no atma; but it is no more than verbal, for Sri Bhagavan used the word 'Atma' to mean the Universal Self, which is Nirvana, whereas Lord Buddha used it to mean the individual soul. And Sri Bhagavan also taught that there is no individual being, not only in the sense that it will not endure after death but that it is not now. "Never mind what you will be when you die; find out what you are now."

Teachers who have directed their followers on a more gradual path, shielding their eyes from the blinding simplicity of ultimate Truth, have affirmed the survival of the soul after this life. However, the contradiction, like all spiritual contradictions, is only apparent, and the clearest outer sign of that is that Buddhism itself combines the teaching of heaven and hell and reincarnation with that of the unreality of the individual soul. Any other life or world is as real as this one, but in truth this also is unreal, and therefore, instead of directing men to seek

a higher level of comparative but not ultimate reality Bhagavan, like Buddha, insisted on the tatal unreality of the ego whether in this life or any other. "First find out what you are now."

The Buddha was very little concerned with theory. His purpose was less to construct a cosmology than to show men the way from suffering to Peace. Like Sri Bhagavan he brushed aside solutions that go only part of the way and left only the pure affirmation of Nirvana and of Maya, of the Self and illusion. And yet theorists have descended upon his teaching and argued it out into patterns which help neither themselves nor others to escape from the wheel of suffering. It is possible that they will fasten on the teaching of Sri Bhagavan also, but it will not be his real teaching that they expound, for his real teaching was to avoid the inessential and follow the way to Self-realization, When asked questions within the framework of Hindu spiritual sciences he would sometimes answer them technically, but often he would brush them aside. He gave no ground for mental speculation and on the whole discouraged even spiritual sciences concerned with all the vast range of intermediate reality: "Just as it is futile to examine the rubbish that has to be swept up only to be thrown away, it is futile for him who seeks to know the Self, if, instead of casting away the *tattvas* that envelop the Self, he sets himself to enumerate them or to examine their qualities."

Not only was the Buddha not concerned to elaborate a cosmology; he was also very little concerned to establish a social order. So far as he did so it was mainly through the negative act of refusing to recognize caste. Whoever proved himself capable of following the Path was capable. Sri Bhagavan took up the same attitude. However, since his purpose was not to found a new religion or social order, he did and said nothing to attack caste. He simply bestowed his Grace on all in the measure in which they were prepared to receive it. If the Brahmins chose to sit apart in the ashram dining-hall they could — but he did not sit with them. If they found it appropriate to recite the Vedas in the hall they could — but no devotee, whether woman, low caste or foreigner, was to be excluded from his Presence during the recitation.

The difference in expression between the teaching of the Buddha and of Sri Bhagavan mainly stems from the fact that the Buddha was founding a new religion. Therefore he spoke in such a way as to appeal to the masses as well as the seekers. Therefore, although he also stressed that it is Knowledge that brings Deliverance, he cast his teaching in a more emotional mould, speaking rather of suffering and relief from suffering. But the meaning is the same: that it is attachment that causes suffering, and that the attachment is to an illusion and is dispelled by Knowledge. On the other hand, just because the teaching was adapted to the world at large,

genuine seekers on the Path, who desired its essence, had to renounce the world. Giving up home and property and entering a monastery was the outer symbol of giving up attachment and turning from illusion to enter the heart.

Since the teaching of Sri Bhagavan was directed to those who aspire to take the Path, he spoke more coolly and clearly, rather of ignorance than of suffering, rather of Knowledge than of relief from suffering. And since he was not formulating a new religion for the world, he did not withdraw his devotees from the life of the world. The conditions of life are such today that very many who crave for Grace and guidance find it difficult or impossible to withdraw from the world or even to observe the full and detailed obligations of their religion, whichever it may be. And Bhagavan has absolved those who turn to him from the need to do so. That is his great Mercy. Not only Hindus, but Buddhists, Christians, Muslims, Jews, Parsis, all came to him, and he never advised any to change from one religion to another. He prescribed the *vichara* for all alike. So long as any other observances, of whatever religion, helped a devotee, Bhagavan never advised him to discontinue them; but when the *vichara* is effectively practised it supersedes other observances, and, asked about that, Bhagavan approved and said: "All other methods only lead up to the *vichara*."

Since, as I have explained in another essay, the *vichara* as taught by Bhagavan contains a large element of *karma-marga* as well as *jnana-marga,* he never advised any to withdraw from the life of the world. He explained that the one object is to overcome the I-am-the-doer illusion, and therefore it is of no help to exchange the thought "I am a householder" for the thought "I am a monk". What is necessary is to discard both and remember only "I am".

Through the power of his Grace, Bhagavan has re-opened to mankind the Direct Path of Self-enquiry prescribed in only slightly different form by Lao Tsu and by the Buddha. "Self-enquiry alone can reveal the truth that neither the ego nor the mind really exists and enable one to realize the pure undifferentiated Being of the Self or Absolute. Having realized the Self, nothing remains to be known, because it is perfect Bliss, it is the All."

The very simplicity of Bhagavan's teaching makes it easy to repeat or expound, but it was only his tremendous power that could open it as a living path to mankind. It was only the silent impregnation with Grace that could enable any to follow him. This was given by a concentrated look of eyes shining with love and power to one who had the immense fortune of coming before him, and by silent transmission to all who turned to him in their heart from a distance.

Had this initiation to a new Path and this potent guidance ended when Sri Bhagavan cast away his body, there would be little purpose in writing about it. But his compassion was more vast and his boon more enduring. He himself said: "I am not going away; I shall still be here." The doorway that he opened is still open. His Grace is still poured out on all who turn to him. His compassion bears up all who aspire but stumble. His power is more unrestricted now than before. On all who turn to him his initiation will descend, and for all who aspire, in all religions, the Path he opened is still open.

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THE DIRECT PATH

ALL Spiritual Masters have had one purpose: to help men overcome the powerfuf illusion of ego and abide in the perfect bliss of the Self or at any rate to approach towards this. They have used open or veiled language to suit the understanding of those to whom the message was given. In India and China many have declared the ultimate truth openly: that only the Self is, that you are nothing other than the Self, that the universe is a mere manifestation of the Self without inherent reality, that God is the Self, and that by discarding the illusion of otherness you can realize that identity with the Self which always was, is and will be, beyond the conditions of life and time. In the West the teaching

has been more veiled and indirect, camouflaged under appeals to approach God in love and submission and conform to His Will. However, no such division can be absolute. In the Western religions there have been those who have proclaimed the Supreme Identity, while in India there have been the Tantric and Dvaita or Bhakti teachers who have guided men along the paths of duality to Unity. The final Goal is the same, even though those who follow the less direct paths of quality may not perceive it at the beginning, or may only recognize it in theory without making it their constant *sadhana*, or may deny it and persecute those who proclaim it.

Some Spritual Masters have come to "confirm the law and the prophets" in founding a new religion, thereby establishing a complete pattern of life for a whole community as well as a Path for those who are drawn consciously towards the Goal which ultimately none can evade. Therefore they have had to clothe their more direct teaching in parables and symbols which could have an outer meaning for all who do not aspire beyond the ethics and devotion of religion. Within the framework of a religion, some have, in the same way, lived for the spiritual revitalisation of the whole community as well as for the few who strive with consciousness of the Goal, while others have confined themselves more or less exclusively to guiding aspirants on the Path, and have spoken a clearer language; in

either case one of the signs of genuineness being that they have lived and taught strictly within the framework of their religion, even though the literalists might persecute them or call them heretics.

Bhagavan Sri Ramana conforms to none of these categories and in this he is, as far as I know, unique. He came neither to found a new religion nor to give guidance strictly within an existing one but to open a Path to those who seek in all religions, the world over. His coming in such a way is a response to the conditions of the world in which he came. Today the world has reached a state of unprecedented spiritual darkness. In some countries religion is denounced and men are taught to accept the material world and physical life as all there is. In other countries countless numbers limit themselves to the material and physical, whether or not they nominally profess any religion. Even those countries which still acknowledge a religion glory in having deprived it of all control over the lives of men or the education of children. All religions have dwindled in numbers (proportionately, that is, to the size of the population) and in spiritual power. In Christian countries the initiatic paths to realization have more or less completely been lost, and in other communities also they are fewer and less potent than ever before. Often they have gone underground and their Masters are hard to find, while false, self-styled masters are as vociferous as they are dangerous, and old truths are given forth in

garbled form, mixed with modern errors. And yet the re-ascent is always prepared before the nadir is reached, and it is also true today that books of ancient wisdom are accessible in all languages and the doctrine of Advaita, of Oneness with the Self, is openly written about in the West as well as the East, and also that Western science itself has at last found the material world not to be material, since there is no 'matter'. Coupled with this mental re awakening is a dread of the chaos towards which the once vaunted 'progress' is leading mankind. And, as a result, many, both in the West and the East, are drawing back disgusted from the crude violence and hollow platitudes of a material civilisation and groping for spiritual Reality. This is both the circumstance and the reason for Bhagavan's living on earth among us and for the message he brought and the path he made open.

The purpose of Bhagavan's appearance in the form of Sri Ramana was to re-open to mankind the Direct Path of Self-enquiry. Not only had this path become inaccessible, but Sages had predicted long ago that it would be too arduous for this spiritually dark age and that more indirect methods would be necessary. Only Bhagavan himself could have re-opened this path and made it accessible to all who turn to him from all religions. Whether they are many or few is not the question, only that he will guide and support all who turn to him and follow his instructions. To do so, they

must first invoke his guidance as their Guru, for neither this nor any other path is possible without the Grace of the Guru. The more complete the submission, the more powerful will be the support. Without the Grace of Bhagavan the method prescribed by him would have no effect at all, Some may wonder at its simplicity but, with his Grace, its simplicity is its power. And as a mere mental ezercise its simplicity would probably leave it innocuous. Therefore, while other more elaborate spiritual exercises are not made public lest people should misuse them and do themselves harm, Bhagavan proclaimed this path openly in speech and writing and approved of his devotees doing so.

Although the direct path is, but for his Grace, the most inaccessible to modern man on account of its very simplicity and directness, it is the most accessible, and in many cases the only accessible path from the contingent point of view, namely that, because of its very directness, it requires no ritual or forms of worship, no priesthood or congregation, no outer signs or special observances, but can be practised in the workshop or kitchen or city office as well as in the monastery or hermitage.

Also it requires no great burden of theory. Its description as *Jnana-marga*, the Path of Knowledge or Intellect sometimes leads to the idea that it is more philosophical than other paths, but the opposite is true. It is the

sword that cuts through the Gordian knot of philosophy. The structure of spiritual philosophy or science, whichever one may choose to call it, is vast; its ramifications may be bewildering. On various paths more or less theoretical knowledge has to be mastered, and usually the less direct the path the greater the need for theory. Only on the Direct Path the one stupendous truth of Advaita, like a veritable sword-flash, cuts through the entanglements and is all the theory needed. The whole intricate theory of posthumous development falls away, since it is necessary to discover what you are now and in eternity, not what you will be when you die. The traditional doctrine of cycles of history is unnecessary, since "the wise man is always in *Satya-Yuga*". The complex Yogic and Tantric sciences of the non-physical powers and modalities of man and the techniques for developing them are superfluous, since you are not all that but the Self. The vast fabric of spiritual cosmology, expounding the stages of devolution from the Formless Substratum down to the state of physical man, and the stages of man's return, does not arise when the cosmos is to be looked upon simply as a dream from which to awaken. On all these branches of spiritual science Bhagavan refused to answer questions, repeating always that what is needed is to concentrate on the Self that you really are.

However, it is not only in its simplicity of application and its freedom from inessentials that the path

Bhagavan opened for us is the most direct. It is so intrinsically. This can, perhaps, be best explained by outlining briefly the initial position of the aspirant, then the task before him, then the methods of accomplishing it.

The initial position is that Atma, the Self, or Spirit, alone is and is manifested in all the forms of the universe and in your being, without ever ceasing from its formless, changeless state, just as, when you have a dream, your mind creates all the people and circumstances in it, contains them and re-absorbs them, without ceasing to be itself, without losing anything by their emergence or gaining anything by their re-absorption. But there also appears to be an ego, an indivdual self, which imagines itself a real and separate being, as though one of the persons in your dream should imagine himself to exist apart from the mind in which the dream takes place. The Self is in unchanging Bliss and Perfection, without birth or death, beginning or end; the ego is in unceasing turmoil, plagued by hope and fear, anxiety and regret, attachment and bereavement, and foredoomed to death. But, as its sole good, the ego has an intuition of the Self, which it conceives of as a greater Being, infinitely good, unfathomably wise, boundlessly loving; and it calls this Being 'God.'

The task is to extinguish the **ego-sense** so that only the Self, which alone was, is and will be, remains in

consciousness and sees all this panorama as its own manifestation. As an expression of this, Bhagavan often said laughingly: "You have only to disrealize unreality and Reality will appear". This task normally means passing from unity through duality to unity; for at the beginning it appears to the aspirant that his ego is the one indisputable reality, then he feels the reality of both the ego and God or Self, and the end is when the ego-sense is dissolved.

The ways of undertaking this task are innumerable, but it will suffice here to divide them into three general categories: that of exoteric religion, that of indirect spiritual paths, and that of the Direct Path of Self-enquiry.

The way of exoteric religion is to progressively replace egoism by submission to the will of God. Its four cardinal demands are faith, love, humility and good deeds Insofar as they are complied with they effectively bring a man towards Self-realization, even though he does not consciously envisage this. True, the Goal is not likely to be attained in this life, but in God's patience a lifetime is very little. Faith strengthens the intuitional conviction of the reality of God or the Self. Humility, its counterpart, weakens the belief in the ego and lessens the importance attached to it. Love strives to surrender the ego to God and its welfare to others. Good deeds deny egoism in practice and are alike the fruit and the proof of love and humility. Therefore Bhagavan

encouraged this way sometimes in speaking to those whose nature did not draw them to a more conscious *sadhana*.

The way of indirect *sadhana* (that is of spiritual paths more conscious of the Goal than exoteric religion but less direct than Self-enquiry) is to strengthen, purify and harmonise the mind by various techniques and to hold it to the quest of the Self, which is often conceived as Father, Mother or Lover. Bhagavan never denied the efficacy of such methods. Once, when a woman said that Self-enquiry did not help her and asked whether she could follow some other way, he replied : " All ways are good ". However, since, by his Grace, he was opening a more direct and potent path and one more suited to the conditions of modern life, he did consistently deprecate men's following other, less direct paths. He referred to them as " like the thief turned policeman to catch the thief that is himself ". The thief is the ego or mind which usurps the reality of the Self, and by these indirect method of *sadhana*, the mind is trained as a policeman to catch and condemn itself.

On such a path there is the danger that the thief turned policeman may acquire police powers and then his thievish nature re-assert itself and do far more harm than it ever could before. The ego may acquire powers and perceptions beyond the physical and then persuade itself and others that it is the Self and become that most terrible

scourge, a false guru, consuming others to feed its unconfessed vanity. Or it may simply entrench itself at some high post which it imagines to be final but which beautiful, though it may be,can no more endure than can the physical body. In any case, the mind must at last be extinguished in the Self which alone is,so it is simpler and more direct for it to strive to do so from the beginning by awakening the Self-awareness of the Self and subsiding before that awareness.

And that is the Direct Path as taught by Bhagavan: to forget the ego and discover the Self, not as one self discovering another, but by awakening Self-awareness of the Self, by beginning, occasionally and imperfectly at first, but ever more constantly and powerfully, to be the Self. Turning to Bhagavan and invoking his Grace, sit in concentration on the spiritual heart at the right side of the chest, the seat of Being in man, the spot to which every man instinctively points when he says: "It was I". And so long as thought is needed, ask, "who am I?" If other thoughts rise do not follow them but look at them and ask: "What is this thought? Who did it come to? Who am I?" And so each thought will fade out, leaving only the basic I-thought. And who am I? If evil thoughts arise they are treated in the same way, for they are bringing up evil tendencies which one might not have known in oneself but which have to be seen to be got rid of. It may be possible at first to practise this Self-enquiry only for a short time, a few minutes, before the

mind wanders, but by practice and devotion to Bhagavan that time can be lengthened to half an hour or an hour morning and evening.

There is no mental or verbal answer to the question. At first there may be no answer at all. But with earnest endeavour the answer begins to come as a vibration of Self-awareness in the heart, perhaps, for a short but eternal while, as a vast luminosity a radiant peace of pure Being

As on every path, progress is gradual and requires constant effort, whether or not there be the radiant foreglow of Truth come and gone again. Bhagavan expressly warned the disciple for whom he wrote 'Self-Enquiry': "However, the Self-oblivious ego, even when once made aware of the Self, does not get Liberation — that is Self-Realization—on account of the obstruction of accumulated mental tendencies; and it frequently confuses the body with the Self, forgetting that itself is in truth the Self. Long cultivated tendencies are to be eradicated only by long continued meditation." A miracle such as Bhagavan's own immediate realization of the Self is not to be achieved by others, and he never let them to expect it. Actually, to desire success or even to think about it is itself an impediment, since it means desiring achievement for the ego instead of trying to extinguish the ego by asking 'Who am I?'.

The vibrant awareness of Self is to be made more frequent and uninterrupted until it awakens as soon as one sits in meditation, and then until it becomes constant not only in hours of meditation but underlying all the actions of life. In proportion as it grows stronger and more continuous the ego is weakened and, what comes to the same, purified in preparation for its final immolation. Bhagavan said: "The moment the ego-self tries to know itself it changes in character; it begins to partake less and less of the body, in which it is absorbed, and more and more of pure consciousness, the Self or Atman."

The 'Forty Verses' composed by Bhagavan are the doctrine of the Direct Path. In verses 29 and 30 he thus succinctly describes it:

> "The path of Knowledge is only to dive inwards with the mind, not uttering the word 'I', and to question whence, as 'I', it rises. To meditate 'This is not I' or 'That I am' may be an aid, but how can it form the enquiry? "When the mind, inwardly enquiring 'Who am I?' attains the heart, something of Itself manifests as 'I-I', so that the individual 'I' must bow in shame. Though manifesting, it is not 'I' by nature but Perfection, and this is the Self,"

And yet it is important to remember that this meditation of Self-enquiry is only one part of the process that Bhagavan prescribed. It is to be supplemented by

Self-enquiry applied to the conduct of life, leading to such detachment as cannot be perturbed or elated by good or evil fortune and is not the prey of ambition or desire, anger of regret. "Who loses by this? Who is offended? Or who is praised? Who am I?" The actor is the same whether he is cast in the role of Brutus who stabs or Caesar who is stabed, and, knowing his real Self to be unaffected, he plays either role with like efficiency and fidelity.

The outer discipline of Self-enquiry is a constant check on actions and on the motives from which they spring. Sincerely and constantly applied, it removes the need for any formal code of conduct, for it strikes directly at the egoism in every action and reaction. The impulses of the ego will not change immediately. An insult will still cause anger and a flattering remark pleasure; attachment to property and comfort will still continue; the senses will still clamour; but all such impulses will be exposed for what they are so that the result will be to recognize one's egoism and feel shame and reluctance over each of its manifestations From that point its eradication will begin; but only by constant effort and remembering,

The combination of these two modes of Self-enquiry makes the path opened by Bhagavan not only direct but ntegral. It has normally been held that *Jnana-marga*, the Direct Path of Self-enquiry, is a path only for the

recluse who abandons the world and strives by pure meditation, but Bhagavan has broadened it to make it accessible to men and women in the world of today. In technical terminology, he has made it perfect *karma-marga* as well as perfect *jnana-marga.* That is why, although he refused to give advice on other matters, he uniformly dissuaded those who asked him from renouncing the life of the world.

I have described these two modes of Self-enquiry as separate, and in fact they begin so, but they fuse into one integral process. The outer remembering that serves as a check on actions and their motives begins to have the effect of singing awake the vibrant Self-awareness attained in meditation; and the development of this Self-awareness leads to an ever more constant and spontaneous remembrance and check upon actions. Thus the ego is starved inwardly and mutilated outwardly, and each process strengthens the other untill they fuse into one.

And yet, even so, it may be asked how such a path can be integral if it does not leave room for bhakti, that is for love and devotion. For the path of bhakti presupposes a conception of duality, of the Other to whom one submits. However, the Grace of Bhagavan was too vast to exclude any possibility. Although he spoke of it less frequently, he did open a path of submission and devotion also. He said: "There are two ways either ask yourself 'who am I? or submit." And, even

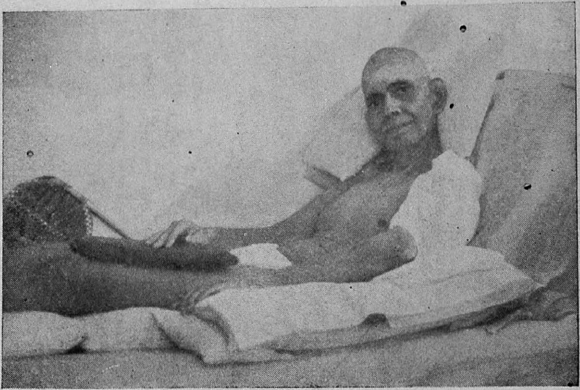
more explicitly, he said : " Submit to me and I will strike down the mind. " When asked about Islam, he said " Islam means ' submission, and that is all that is needed. "

However it was not only a matter of another, so to speak, alternative path ; devotion to the Guru is a powerful and essential ingredient of the Direct Path that Bhagavan taught us. It is true that he reminded us that the real Guru is in the heart, and once the mind turns to seek Him He draws it ever more powerfully to Himself. But, to begin the process, the outer Guru is needed, for, as he said, " The outer Guru gives the mind a push inwards and the inner Guru pulls it. " And Bhagavan is the universal Sad-Guru who of his Grace, opens the path to every man who turns to him and invokes his guidance; and ultimately the two are One. It was so when he was with us in the body, He said, " The Guru is One ". But it is more obviously so now than ever, since the apparent duality of outer and inner Guru has been removed.

Submission is all that is needed. Bhagavan said " Only keep quiet and Bhagavan will do the rest." That is the great task : through devotion to Bhagavan and Self-enquiry to keep the mind quiet, for it is like a monkey in constant vain agitation. Only when it submits and is quiet can the Guru, who is the Self be heard.

The Direct Path awakens Love through Knowledge. It is not knowledge of one by another or mind-knowledge, but the awakening Bliss of the Self to which the mind is

drawn and in which it is absorbed in Love. That is why the beginning of the *vichara,* before the Inner Guru is yet awakened, can only be by turning to Bhagavan with the fullest possible love and faith and submission and opening one's heart to him. Whoever opens his heart to Bhagavan and uses the *vichara,* as I have described it will feel the sweetness and power of his support and will know that this is true. Whoever submits to him will be borne up and never forsaken. "God and Guru are not really different, they are identical. He who has earned the Grace of the Guru will undoubtedly be saved and never forsaken ; just as the prey that has fallen into the tiger's jaws will never be allowed to escape. But the disciple, for his part should unswervingly follow the path shown by the Master."



RAMANA SAD-GURU

THE story of Sri Bhagavan is no more ended than the story of Christ was ended on the cross. Indeed, a new and more potent chapter is now beginning. He said: "I am not going away; where could I go?" Though we may seek to leave him in our blindness, he cannot leave us, for he is the Self.

Not only did he say it, but he put it in the hearts of his devotees to believe it. That desolate night when a brilliant star trailed slowly across the sky at the very moment of his leaving the body, there was neither the frantic grief nor the despair that had been expected, but instead all were assuring each other that he was still there. Each one felt in his heart the continued Presence.

Those whom one had thought would need consolation were able to console others.

That whole night the body that Bhagavan had worn and discarded was exposed to the view of the devotees in the ashram hall. There was grief and weeping, but underneath it there was a strange peace that only Bhagavan himself could have implanted.

Few had realized how beloved he was in the neighbouring town of Tiruvannamalai, but all through the night vast crowds came and passed through the ashram hall in grief and awe, to have a last *darshan* of the now lifeless face. Long processions walked to and from the town singing 'Arunachala-Siva'.

In the days that followed, there was very little either of the wild grief or the quarrelling that so often follow on the death of a Master. The strong convinction of his continued Presence bore up the devotees and held most of them together. A committee of them has been formed to run the ashram affairs together with the former Sarvadhikari.

The silent meditation and the morning and evening chanting of the Vedas and 'Thirty Verses' continue before the *samadhi* of Bhagavan as they did in his bodily presence. Added to them now is the chanting of the 108 Names of Bhagavan. Now as then, access is for all,

whatever their caste or religion. The spiritual support that comes in sitting before the *samadhi* is not only as strong but as sweet and subtle as it was before the bodily presence.

To all those who turn to Bhagavan in their hearts the response is even more immediate, the support more powerful. Not only that (for that is true wherever they may be) but the spiritual revitalisation that they used to derive from a visit to Tiruvannamalai still continues, even though the beloved face is hidden.

Some of those who formerly lived there have left. Others who thought they would leave are being drawn back. And some stayed on and never felt a breach. Devotees from the surrounding towns and from distant places still look forward to the possibility of a visit, as they did before. Seekers after Divine Grace and Guidance will come as in the past, perhaps even more than in the past. The shrine is a centre whose potency will grow, not diminish. And many will envy those who beheld the beauty of the bodily form.

Bhagavan always bade us seek the Inner Guru. The love that we bore to the outer Guru helped us to do so, and yet, in a way, it impeded. Now he has taken up his abode in our heart. More than ever, we have to discard our impurities in order to discover Him, the Self, the Essence of our Being; more than ever he assists us to do so.

He is the Sad-Guru who teaches in silence. *Dakshinamurthi* is said to abide on the north slope of the sacred Arunachala hill ready to give the most potent silent *diksha* and *upadesa* to any who come, but the spot is inaccessible. Sri Ramana is Dakshinamurthi. He himself said so. He has made accessible what was inaccessible, for now the Grace that was hidden radiates from his *samadhi*; the Direct Path that had been withdrawn has been brought back.

The body's death has, perhaps, brought about one change. He always said : " Ask yourself, " Who am I " but he also said, " Submit to me and I will strike down the mind. " Now the quest of the Self in the heart and submission to Bhagavan in the heart have become the same. The beauty has become greater, the Grace more abundant, the fusion of *jnana* and *bhakti* more perfect.

" *Who can ever find Thee? The eye of the eye art Thou, and without eyes Thou seest, Oh Arunachala.*

From my home Thou didst entice me, then stealing into my heart, didst draw me gently into Thine. Such is Thy Grace, Oh Arunachala.

I have betrayed Thy secret workings. Be not offended! Show me Thy Grace now openly, Oh Arunachala."

GLOSSARY.

Advaita — The doctrine of Non-duality or No-otherness, that only the Self is.

Ashram — The court or entourage of a Sage.

Atma — The Spirit or Self.

Bhakti-marga — The path of love and devotion,

Bhakta — He who follows the path of love and devotion.

Darshan — Presence or interview.

Diksha — Initiation.

Jivan-Mukta — He who has attained Moksha while still wearing a body.

Jnana-marga* — The path of Knowledge.

Jnani* — The Man of Knowledge, the Enlightened One, Jivan-Mukta.

Kali-Yuga — The Dark Age.

Karma — Destiny resulting from good and evil accumulated in past lives.

Karma-marga — The path of good actions or harmonious living.

* This is the usual transliteration, though the pronunciation is more like 'gnyana'

Maharshi — The Great Rishi.
Moksha or Mukti — Perfect and constant awareness of identity with the Self.
Mouna-diksha — Initiation through silence.
Mouni — One pledged to silence.
Nama-japa — Invocation of the Divine Name.
Pradakshina — Circumambulation of a holy place.
Sad-Guru — The essential or Divine Guru.
Sadhaka — Disciple, devotee, spiritual traveller.
Sadhana — Spiritual path.
Sadhu — One who has renounced the world for the sadhana.
Samadhi—1) Spiritual trance.
2) Absorption in Divine Bliss with or without trance.
3) Death.
4) Shrine or tomb.
Sanyasin — One who has renounced all ties and all ritual.
Sarvadhikari — Absolute authority.
Sattvic—Tending to spirituality.
Sattvic food—Vegetarian and non- heating food.
Sattya-Yuga—The Golden Age.
Tapas — Penance.
Upadesa — Spiritual teaching.
Vichara — Discrimination. Self-enquiry.

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